

City Council of the Mayor and Council of New Castle
Special Council Meeting at Dobbinsville – New Castle
Thursday – September 16, 2010 – 6 p.m.

Council Present:

Council President William Barthel
Councilperson John Gaworski
Councilperson Teel Petty

Also present: Administrator Cathryn Thomas, Chief Kevin McDerby, Sr. Lt. Adam Brams, Master Sgt. Bernard Torre, Code Enforcement Officer John Lloyd

President Barthel welcomed the residents to the meeting and expressed his appreciation for their interest and participation. He provided a short overview of the Dobbinsville Initiative. That includes a plan to create a police substation and also a community use area, both in a building that the City has taken ownership of and plans to rehabilitate.

He explained that one focus of the City Council is to cleanup nuisance properties throughout the City. The City is interested in promotion of home ownership rather than investor owners, through efforts such as Habitat for Humanity, and also helping current homeowners.

Chief McDerby explained how the idea behind the police substation in Dobbinsville came about. He said that it was not the intention to “arrest your way out of anything” and was not saying that the Dobbinsville area is worse than or better than any other area. The City’s concerns are for the people within this community and working in partnership.

He said the Police Department already has computers that no longer meet the department’s needs but could be used for children in the area.

Residents asked many questions about the plans and told the City Council about an effort to have a community center back in the early- to mid-1990s. There was a community committee established back then.

One resident asked if it would be possible to have a University of Delaware student teacher come out to assist.

Chief McDerby said the police presence is going to be at the front desk, with the rest of the building for the community to use. He said he, however, it was not planned to have 24/7 police presence.

Another resident asked about having skilled persons to help residents learn how to use computers.

A community action group needs to assess the community’s needs. Several people have already volunteered to work on that group. President Barthel said it has to be a community effort and is pleased to hear the community interest and support.

Residents suggested several ideas for community cleanups and ways to help people improve their properties.

Chief McDerby said it would likely take a couple of months for the building to be ready.

A resident said just the appearance of the building is a good sign. He said the biggest problem is outsiders who come into Dobbinsville. Other residents agreed, particularly concerning drug issues.

President Barthel explained further on some of the City's efforts toward nuisance properties and efforts to enhance the City Code. He explained that the process does not always move as quickly as the City and neighboring residents might like. The property owners have rights too and often the solution requires action through the courts.

Residents brought up additional concerns, including lighting at the basketball court, notification about registered sex offenders, the work being done on the stormwater project, and a crosswalk and light on Route 9.

President Barthel thanked every one for attending and said he hoped to continue the conversation with the community.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Dickinson
New Castle City Clerk